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A sociological assessment of Bolshevism (1924–5)[†]

Marcel Mauss
(Translated and annotated by Ben Brewster)

Socialism and Bolshevism*

Le Monde Slave has agreed to publish herewith the opening of a short book to be entitled *Appréciation sociologique du bolshévisme* (A Sociological Assessment of Bolshevism).

This work is fairly popular in form and makes no claim to any special originality either as to knowledge of the facts or their treatment.

It consists merely of as simple and accurate as possible an account of Bolshevism as can be produced by a historian whose Russian and knowledge of things Russian are slight, but who has felt it necessary to undertake this work since he needed to respond unemotionally and impersonally to the very serious problem in general political theory posed in the introduction: To what extent does the Bolshevik experiment prove or disprove socialism? The Conclusion, which gives the answer, has been published in the January 1924 number of the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*.

The book consists of that Introduction and five chapters:

- I *To what extent was Bolshevism an experiment? and How did Bolshevism gain control of the Russian Revolution?* (This introduction and chapter are published here.)
 - II *To what extent was Bolshevism socialism? or Bolshevism and Communism.*
 - III *The Economic and Moral Failure.*
 - IV *The New Economic Policy.*
- Finally, a *Conclusion* ends the work.

The book was written late in 1923 and for it to be published the last two chapters have to be updated, which will not be difficult. The chapters here deal only with the events from 1917 to 1923. I feel no need to change anything in them, for, with the exceptions of the documents recently published in *Le Monde Slave* by President Masaryk, General Janin and others, and the fascinating and notorious book by Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, there have not been any very important further revelations about this period. Moreover, like what follows, these new documents, including Trotsky's book, demonstrate the appalling disorder which gave birth to Bolshevism, of which it is the expression, and against which it reacted.¹

Marcel Mauss

Introduction

The need for a sociological study of Bolshevism

The latest form in which socialism has appeared is the one which is called and which calls itself Bolshevism.² This socialist sect adopts for itself with some accuracy the name Communist, in order to mark its distinction from the Social-Democratic parties it disdainfully labels 'petty-bourgeois'. It has returned to the term commonly used before the invention of the word 'socialism', thus emphasising that it constitutes not an advance but a return to a cruder but purer tradition than that of 'social democracy'.

Communism has one enormous advantage over other socialist doctrines and other socialist parties: it has the authority of the fact, of victory, of strength and of political realisation. For very many socialists, Communism is the first attempt at socialism, with less admixture of foreign elements than the Paris Commune; and a considerable mass of honest workers and good socialists, not only in Russia, have been converted to Communism because, for them, the Social Revolution is victorious over there, even if that victory has been dearly bought. For them it will spread inexorably from this new centre; this new Mecca is not a Salentum, they agree; but it will become one; they have faith in spite of everything. Over there is the promised land come true, where the holy doctrine is put into practice. Religiously inspired, it is from that doctrine, from the Red International, from Moscow that they await both the idea and above all the peremptory command that will bring that idea into being as it was engendered over there, by violence, by force. The Russians have shown what the great revolt is capable of, even at the cost of misery and famine. It is for them to command the World Revolution.

On the other hand, the politicians and theoreticians of bourgeois politics proceed in the same manner in the opposite direction. They argue from the supposed failure of the Social Revolution in Russia to turn the masses against the idea of socialism as productive of disorder, terror, poverty, famine. The former adore the *fait accompli*, the latter abominate it. Both these attitudes are natural enough.

Thus it is vital that an experimental politics have a position on the subject; for at all events the Bolshevik experiment is an experiment in the vulgar sense of the word, a try-out. That is why, despite my distaste for considerations too restricted to some particular society, some particular movement, despite my wish above all to avoid any hasty conclusions, despite my determination to observe and not to censure, despite my purpose only to prescribe on solidly established premises, and to avoid always

wishing to reform society, to lecture and correct mankind, I have had to take sides. I have felt myself called on, in Comte's words, to 'assess' the Bolshevik 'experiment'. It is an idea and it is a social fact, and one of the first importance. It would be absurd and theoretically unwise to neglect it.

Moreover, this 'assessment' is rich in lessons.

The socialist origins of Bolshevism

Some socialists today deny any kinship between Russian Bolshevism and their principles and any responsibility on socialism's part for this gigantic and tragic adventure. This is to put the matter too quickly, and incorrectly.

The Bolsheviks, Lenin and his Party, lay claim very precisely and perfectly justly to a definite part of the socialist tradition. Revolutionaries à la Blanqui, heroes of a successful conspiracy and coup in the front lines, they are right to proclaim themselves worthy heirs to Babeuf and the Commune. Communists in the romantic manner, they can, moreover, appropriate a considerable part of the Marxist doctrine whose sole representatives they claim to be. Even their pretensions to annex as so-called Communists both Marx and even Jaurès are not unfounded for the former, if they lack any semblance of foundation for the latter. Marx and Engels were the last among their contemporaries to resign themselves to using the term socialism instead of the execrated word communism, which they continued frequently to bracket with socialism. They were amongst those who invented, not the practice or the word, but the usage, the technical value of the term class struggle. Finally, it was they who had the idea of a Social Revolution which would be a class revolution rather than a National one. Only after the dissolution of the First International, after the constitution of the Social-Democratic parties, after the first successes of the latter, did Marx and Engels revise their doctrine. More precisely it was Engels, after Marx's death, it was the epigones Bernstein, Kautsky and the second generation of Marxists who developed the notion of a Revolution achieved by the legal conquest of political power, and also of a Revolution which would not be the exclusive property of the industrial proletariat but one made by it in the name of its 'historical mission' for the community as a whole. The Communist is quite justified in appropriating to himself a definite part of Marxism, the oldest part, if not the strongest and most reasonable one. It should be remembered that it was not until the London Congress of 1896 that the still only partly formed International broke definitively with the anarchists.

On the other hand, the Moscow Communists' claim to Jaurès is much more hazardous, even a plain lie, seizing on a few revolutionary or Marxist declarations about the 'creative hatred', the 'destructive Revolutions' that will defeat the 'criminal governments' which wished for the War. Simultaneously conciliatory and daring, Jaurès never renounced the right to revolution and a revolutionary doctrine, but nor was there ever a greater democrat, republican and legalist, a greater socialist in the broadest sense, not an 'ouvrierist', and no one had more hatred of all violence, all class tyranny, all Terror, all constraint save that of the law, or all repression save of crimes such as aggressive war, denial of justice, or reaction.²

Nevertheless, socialism, and especially Marxist socialism, has no right to repudiate its direct kinship with Communism, and its relative responsibility for the latter. Nor is it in its interests to do so. For however horrible and crazy, however stupid and sinister the Bolshevik regime has been and still is in parts, it has nonetheless an indisputable grandeur. The intellectual and practical daring, the sincerity and disinterestedness in the attempt to establish a new form of society, the heroism of those activists who, throughout three years of long and unattonable civil wars, during two years of foreign intervention, risked their lives and those of their families; the moral integrity and purity of the immense majority of the Communists, workers, intellectuals mingled with a certain number of peasants and a few noblemen of good Russian family, who administer and have administered, badly perhaps, but without taking anything for themselves, an immense patrimony; — the scale itself, 'colossal', 'enormous' — as its opponents say — of the world project, the crazy but grandiose notion of a Universal Revolution; — a patriotic project, too, since the Bolsheviks, abandoning a naive internationalism, have restored, in the guise of a Federation, the unity and even the greatness of a Russia imperilled by alien and foreign intrigue. This certainly constitutes a sufficient moral credit on the balance sheet for Communists throughout the world to be proud of, and socialists to be aware of, and for anyone of any generosity of soul not to be indifferent to. Later I shall add the shadows, including moral ones, to the picture. I shall draw them in, just as I shall the fine features. However, the question as to whether Communism is or is not a form — a new and unexpected or old and orthodox form — of socialism³ is rather a question of history and revolutionary dogmatics and in the end a fairly secondary matter. For, in the public mind, in the minds of those who made the Bolshevik Revolution, and also in fact, the Bolshevik revolution is undoubtedly an 'experiment in socialism'.

The possibility, utility and necessity of a judgement

It is not too early to judge the Bolshevik experiment nor impossible to judge it dispassionately with all the necessary distance.

First, I am a foreigner and — it has been said — the foreigner has by nature, in general and to a certain degree, the privilege of impartiality, just like the historian.

On the other hand, I have quite enough information. Most of the Russian Communist leaders are excellent journalists and writers, and if they occasionally lie, they nevertheless take pride in a certain frankness and even in an extraordinary cynicism in some of their critical articles. They easily forgive themselves their errors and pitilessly pillory their own actions and their results. It will be said that they have suppressed any independent press, censored the dispatches of foreign correspondents, that they search Russians and visitors as they leave the country. No matter — they themselves tell themselves much of the truth about themselves, they have such pride and such an itch for publicity that their official documents amply suffice as testimony against them. Finally, for the last two years so many Russians, so many Communists of all countries, and more or less faithful ones, have come and gone, so many diplomatic missions have been installed in Russia, so many impartial travellers have been able to cross that immense empire in all directions that we have at our disposal in writing and by hearsay 'everything necessary to make a judgement'.⁴

Then again, the experiment has been going on for long enough. It has developed over a period of more than six years, the last three of which without blockade or foreign intervention, in conditions that the so-called Soviet government has, after all, more or less freely chosen. During the first three years from 1917 until the Treaty of Riga [March 18th 1921], the Soviets had a definite excuse in the foreign intervention and an absurd and savage blockade; *they were only half autonomous*. Since then their external situation has been relatively normal, their foreign trade, their nationals being treated almost everywhere — except in France — much better than they themselves treat foreign trade and foreign subjects at home. They no longer have excuses or arguments in the actions of others.

I shall therefore, as was once the fashion, 'assess' in Comte's way, 'criticise' in the manner of Renouvier, this phase in the history of Russia and in contemporary history as a whole. Clearly, I shall have to avoid the errors in Comte's reasoning, his erection of a philosophy of history to justify a personal opinion, and one based only on romantic and novelistic conceptions of the history

of the middle ages, of the Church and the Monarchy in France. Similarly, I am unmoved by the notions of moral decline and revival that form the basis of Criticism's philosophy of history. Nevertheless, the form of discussion that consists of locating a moment of history in its quasi-necessity in history as a whole is still of use.

So long as sociology, still in its infancy, has not created the statistical, mathematical, historical and geographical methods of observation and recording that will enable it to follow — if not to predict and guide — every social crisis; so long as we are, in consequence, unable to assess the effects of such crises, still less to correct their excesses or promote their finest achievements; so long as the arts of politics or morals do not correspond to a more advanced social science — it will remain necessary to use the ordinary dialectical procedures, so long as we do so with the maximum possible method in relation to subjects defined as perfectly as possible. Morals and politics have no time to wait. It is enough, then, that they proceed by exclusively rational paths and taking into account only facts.

And this right to assessment is recognised by Bolshevism and socialism themselves; they claim — to their honour — to be conscious social movements, perpetually vigilant and constantly adjusting themselves to everyday experience. This method has been followed even by Marxism, whose scientific pretensions are simply exaggerated: for the familiar thesis of the 'historical mission' of the proletariat is no more than an insight into the part to be played by a class in a general advance, conceived at first in a Hegelian excess of subtlety,⁵ then too simplistically either in a crudely materialist form à la Büchner, or in that of historical materialism, then simply in the Spencerian manner. It would not be difficult here to pastiche Marx, to rewrite vis-à-vis this gigantic Commune his two famous pamphlets on the class struggles in France and on the Paris Commune. If I steer clear of such parody, I hope I shall be allowed to follow fundamentally his example.

On the other hand, the various phases of the Russian Revolution are of special interest to the sociologist in particular.

First of all, it is a gigantic social phenomenon, and in particular one of the immediate present, the constant observation of which can thus provide the scientist with joys of the kind only fully familiar to astronomers and physicists: the joys of experiment verifying theory and prediction. Moreover, it is a new phenomenon: the slow and difficult gestation of an order of new and unforeseen facts. Even by comparison with the state of sociology and the few predictions and moral prescriptions ventured or

prescribed by Durkheim and others, it opens up perspectives for innumerable and endless reflections. Hence I was at the outset among those most ready to greet it with curiosity, respect and even enthusiasm.

However, after all this, at the end of 1917 and up to September 1918, I had to pay dearly and in person for the military consequences of Bolshevik treachery, or more precisely of the Russian catastrophe. On the other hand, I already foresaw what was to follow from the radical anarchism and naive internationalism espoused by the Bolsheviks at that time. I knew that they would provide murky elements with the opportunity to accumulate disorders and follies, dubious negotiations with the enemy. I was quite convinced that Lenin and Trotsky⁶ were making a fundamental mistake in not conceiving their revolution, despite its profoundly Russian character, as a national one, in a country in which the conscious patriotism of all the intelligent classes and the unconscious patriotism of the peasant were both expressed in an exacerbated nationalism; their lack of national feeling and of feeling for government — a failing they have energetically corrected since then — made me lose all hope in them.

But in other respects I was fascinated, even inspired by them, and really disposed, despite their errors, to greet them respectfully as the harbingers of a new social world. One basic feature, in fact, aroused my sympathy. The Bolshevik Revolution — inventive as are all popular and workers' movements — had created not only an idea but a form of organisation: the soviet, a professional organisation which was at the same time the manager of the national property entrusted to the workers' councils and the 'cell', the elementary political 'nucleus' of the whole administrative and legislative life of the state. This was the first attempt at a simultaneously national and professional organisation both of property and of the state.

The idea and the realisation of the soviet corresponded — to the very image — with two of the few moral, political and economic conclusions that Durkheim had always advocated and that death had prevented him seeing actually materialised. The whole conclusion of both the *Social Division of Labour* and of his *Suicide*, all his teachings on civic, professional and domestic morals, advocated both the constitution of this professional property and the establishment of a moral and political law of the group formed out of the economic association of those united in the same production. Even the purely scientific conclusions of his lectures, his *History of the Family*, led him to make the professional group, if not the universal legatee, at least the partial inheritor of the rights, duties and political powers of the ancient family. For only the profes-

sional group seemed to Durkheim close enough to the individual for individual and group to have the same interests, and yet sufficiently independent of the individual and with sufficient authority over him to be an organism of power and property strong enough to discipline him. Finally, Durkheim saw the need, between the omnipotence of an economy outside the individual's control, a life without moral constraint other than the law and a weakened family on the one hand, and the arbitrariness and absolute sovereignty of the state on the other, for an intermediary echelon, vested with property, wealth, disciplinary rights and powers, moderating the individual, but also the state. Durkheim established by elimination that this form of group could only be the professional group. Whether or no he was mistaken as to the scope of this profound notion, whether or no there are other forms of essential secondary groups than the professional ones, are questions that cannot be answered here. But the closeness of Durkheim's theory and the practice of the soviets should be emphasised. One might even speak of descent, since Sorel's earliest ideas derive from Durkheim's theories, and Lenin has admitted the influence of Sorel; a fact of which the latter – despite having become fairly reactionary by that time – died fairly proud.^b

However brutal, however elementary, however unreasonable the application of these ideas, their very application was a matter of considerable concern to me. Would our dearest, most laboriously acquired and most ardently advocated ideas be proved or disproved in the process?

No less was the sympathetic disquiet I felt as a socialist. Since Marx the socialists have cautiously refrained from constructing utopias and drawing up the plans for future societies. On the contrary, hardly advocating anything but the general apocalyptic thesis of the 'taking over of the administration of things', they have left vague, because unpredictable, the collective procedures of this administration. How would this revolution suppress 'the administration of men by men'? What would emerge from all this moral effervescence, this political and economic chaos? The worst misfortunes and follies were to be feared – and some have occurred. The finest harvests were hoped for, and it should not be said that nothing has been achieved in Russia. However irreligious my socialism, however little respect was aroused in me by the first acts of the Bolsheviks – the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly [January 6th (19th) 1918], the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk [ratified March 16th 1918] – I could not disassociate myself from them. Moscow seemed to many amongst us what it remains for very many enlightened people, even here, a kind of sanctuary incubating the very destiny of our ideas.

The two interests, scientific and personal, even reinforced one another.

For, in me the enthusiasm of the scientist and that of the political activist mingled and inspired one another, since it was not only socialism that was being invoked over there, it was also a socialism which among the options open to it had chosen my own, the professional organisation. This was a poignant experiment, and it explains the attention with which I have followed the long series of events that is still unfolding.

What does it prove? Now that the experiment has been made, this is a question it is right that I am asked, and which I have a strict duty to answer.

Chapter One: To what extent was Bolshevism an experiment?

1 Bolshevism and the Russian Revolution

In making a moral judgement it is customary — except in Russia, where revolutionary jurisprudence has so cavalierly dismissed any ‘juridical ideology’⁷ — to investigate whether the guilty party is responsible, and if he is, whether there are extenuating circumstances. A sociological assessment does not include such procedures — no indictment, no plea, no judgement. Nevertheless, as in medicine, one must pronounce whether a given event is good or bad. Nevertheless, too, one must investigate to what extent a given social movement was autonomous, the cause of its own vicissitudes, or an effect of events wider than itself. Good and evil may stem from other causes than the wills of men or from other wills than those that seem to will them. Hardly any social movement is really the exclusive achievement of those who claim to be its authors. And determinism is even more valid for societies than it is for men. *In Deo agimur, movemur et sumus*. Replace Saint Paul’s and Spinoza’s notion of God with that of environment (*milieu*) and you will have a reasonably accurate expression of the facts. For their part, the Bolsheviks have not been loath to shift — rather childishly — the responsibility for their actions onto others. Moreover, their Marxist terminology gives them a licence to present themselves to themselves and to others as the instruments of a natural necessity. Nevertheless, it would be not only unjust, but also inaccurate, to fail to recognise that on many occasions they have been just that.

The Bolshevik ‘experiment’ only half deserves that glorious name; but it does deserve it to that extent, or rather it deserves the description ‘empirical’, because it has the physiognomy of an experiment in a completely negative sense — because it was made

in the name of no idealism, or rather because it was made while denying any ideology. Of the other, positive characteristics of an experiment — rational action, both deliberate and systematically conducted — it has none. It is not rational; it has not consisted in the application of a given remedy to a given society, it has not been systematic. Behind its surface logic, it has been tossed from a ferocious dogmatism to a versatility undaunted by any contradiction, however great; it has traversed crises of stupid obstinacy, often sublime, often atrocious, and then swung into reverse; cynical admissions and self-criticisms only concealed an inability to pursue with any consistency a generous or even sordid plan. No, this is not a methodically pursued sociological 'experiment', it is just a great adventure.

Even if it had the merit at least of having been intentionally and clearly chosen, the third characteristic of the political experiment, if it had been voluntary! But no, it is to an enormous extent the product of circumstances, it is an effect rather than a volition. It is an accident, it has been grafted, overlaid onto the life of a people; it is not the product of its will, the proper expression of its choice; it does not correspond to its soul, to the movement of the mentality of the Russian people, any more than it is the pure realisation of the ideas of its leaders. But that needs demonstrating, and it can be demonstrated easily if Bolshevism is located in the totality — in the 'bloc' — of the Russian Revolution.

2 How Bolshevism conquered the Russian Revolution

If there is a great social movement worthy of the title revolutionary in the same sense as the Revolutions of England, the United States of America and France, it must be the series of events which, starting in the War, from 1916 on, have totally changed the legal and moral constitution of the Russian people. A contempt for established rights, the adoption of a new system in both political and social life, the two veritable signs⁸ by which one can recognise a Revolution, are found in it to the highest degree. But the Russian Revolution is in no way an autonomous phenomenon as the three others were. In England the gentry and the urban bourgeoisie, in two stages, supported by the broad masses of the people, galvanised by Protestantism, put an end to the absolutist regime of the Tudors and Stuarts. Of their own free will, without external pressure and quite deliberately, they set up a constitutional regime that following generations have only perfected and that English jurists fictionally maintain has been practised for ever. Just before the French Revolution, the 'States',⁹ as they were called, had proclaimed their Declaration of Rights, the pure

expression of the rights of a collectivity to manage its own affairs. In France an intellectual bourgeoisie, already dominant by virtue of its wealth and political power, ready for total power, fairly broadly magnanimous, surrounded by an idealistic and energetic working class, expressing the will of a still uneducated but already emancipated peasantry to whom the Constituent and Legislative Assemblies and the Convention were able to transfer legally considerable amounts of property, in a word, three classes, a marvellous Third Estate, only had to transform itself into the State, opening the eyes of the peoples of the Continent to the beauties of a regime of liberty, equality and — for a time — relative fraternity. The American example was already a model. In these three cases, not to speak of less illustrious ones, an adult nation acting voluntarily overthrew a decadent regime.

The Russian Revolution, on the contrary, like the German, is not the work of the nation. It is not its action, it merely registers a fact. It is the symbol, the symptom, the effect of the fall of the Tsarist regime. The latter had only just withstood the damage inflicted on it by the War in Manchuria. Only the incompetence of the opposition (1905–1906) had allowed the Durnovos and Stolypins their victory. The political stupidity of the two Dumas that followed [the First and Second Dumas, 1906 and 1907] gave ten years extra life to the tyranny of an incompetent court, an unworthy aristocracy, an impotent bourgeoisie, and the exploitation of a predominantly foreign capitalism. The autocratic and Orthodox structure poised — floating — on the immense Russian masses, violently imposed on enormous alien nationalities, the police organisation, the authority of the corrupt hierarchy, the feeble Russian capitalism were in no state to withstand a long and terrible War. They had all failed by the end of 1916. The people and the army, the Tsar, more patriotic than the court, kept up the façade — artificially galvanised by the Allies and sustained everywhere by them, by their credits, their arms supplies. But Protopopov and Stürmer, returning from their visit to London and Paris, saw Warburg in Stockholm, one being Minister-President, the other Chairman of the Duma.^c The armies were barely obtaining their supplies, the interior hanging onto everything and the corps 'scrounging' for the rest amongst themselves; immense reserves of conscripts had no aim but to stay far from the front. The bureaucracy carried on its police work, being incapable of anything else. And Russian capitalism, barely nascent and terribly weak before the War, had definitively collapsed a year earlier. In most of the outlying gubernias, in the whole of Siberia, the movement of food-stuffs and commodities was only carried out by local co-operatives, soviets and zemstvos. No activity any longer supported any other:

all that was left was a little passive obedience to the tenuous will of a colourless Tsar. The defeats of 1916, the threat of treason, a harem conspiracy (Rasputin's murder), the indifference if not the intervention of the Allied ambassadors, the tiny effort of a few politicians and generals, and that was that; the whole edifice collapsed. Between January and March 1917, Tsarism faded away: no one, really no one, overthrew it. The reactionary party only reformed during the civil war and in emigration. Neither the aristocracy, the bureaucracy, the army nor even the police and the clergy dared show the slightest sympathy for the imperial family. The liberal government of L'vov and Milyukov faded away in its turn despite unanimous support in Russia and the loyal collaboration of the Revolutionary Socialists (SRs). Kerensky and the SRs took power. Now at last there was enthusiasm and the Russian Revolution began. But, as can be seen, it was entirely the work of external and internal circumstances, not that of a living society creating for itself by force a constitution against a reaction and from scratch, of its own inspiration.

Just as Russia is not the cause of its Revolution, so the Revolutionary Socialists and Kerensky were no more than its instruments. They were immediately outstripped by events; the situation was admittedly a desperate one. The army failed to understand that the revolution was not peace. The people did not see why the victorious International they heard about did not reorganise the world; and the Allies refused Kerensky the Platonic satisfaction and the prestige of a socialist conference in Stockholm.^d Demagogues and adventurers, revelling in their return from exile, the SRs disrupted the army by their famous prikazy 1 and 2,^e undermining its discipline.

They also destroyed the only two political organisations of 1916 Russia, the bureaucracy and, more serious, the only civic organisation, the Zemstvos: they accorded supremacy to the local Soviets, the Councils 'of Workers and Soldiers' that predate Lenin. As socialists, they emasculated justice and abolished unpopular penalties: capital punishment and perpetual exile, both necessary in wartime. They scrupled to distribute the land to the peasants themselves, wishing to wait for the Constituent Assembly, whose convocation they postponed. Torn between patriotism and their pacifism; undermined by the German intrigue which sent them the Bolsheviks and the reactionary intrigue fomented by an alliance of Black Hundreds and the worst anarchists; confined by Allied pressure, gambling disastrously with the army in Brusilov's unsuccessful offensive [June 18th (July 1st) 1917], standing idly by as that army was routed, they, too, faded away, leaving of their period of power only the memory of lazy weaklings, inadequate

to their immense vicissitudes. The Constituent Assembly, elected far too late [November 12th (25th) 1917], only met after the October Revolution and by Bolshevik consent [January 5th (18th) 1918]; it allowed itself to be ridiculously dispersed by a few sailors and soldiers [January 6th (19th) 1918].

With the Bolsheviks, the Russians found some leaders. At least they had will power. Lenin and Trotsky were practised, no less than Gotz and Martov, in the plots of 1905–1906. But in addition their maximalist doctrine freed them of scruples, misplaced magnanimity and, above all, of any sympathy for the Allies. They had with them men like Dzerzhinsky, Rakovsky, Radek and Peters, who were not even Russians; their savage will, still all-powerful today, was not encumbered by any love for this immense people.

The latter, besides, had quietly given itself up to the joys of being free. The last months of the Kerensky government were one vast festival which continued for some time after the Bolshevik Revolution. The Russians of the countryside and the provinces were ultimately indifferent to the German advance as they were to everything that did not directly affect them and happened far away in Moscow or Petrograd. Only a minority of intellectuals and workers, soldiers and sailors, really took part in the Revolution. It was they who formed up around the tiny team of Bolsheviks, most of whom were émigrés and deportees who had returned to Russia. A few members of this team, Peters for example, were pure adventurers, gunmen experienced in raids on banks and farms in America. Apathy on the one hand, clear, fanatical will and power on the other, that is the relationship which then and now unites the Russian people and its Bolshevik despots. It is not at all like that which linked Cromwell or William of Orange to the English Parliament, Washington to the Philadelphia Convention, our Constituents or Conventionals to their mandators. Just like Tsarism and just as much as it, Bolshevism is grafted onto Russian life, onto the Russian Revolution which it will soon have controlled for six years. The Communists are in the lead, and hence they reap the benefits. They exploit the Russian Revolution, its ideology, or rather they manipulate Russia, its human material, its disproportionate wealth in men and materials. They are no more — and no less — the creators of their regime than the Tsar was of his Byzantine position as ‘autocrat’ and his clerical position as leader of the Orthodox Church. They have seized Russia as the descendants of Rurik once ‘ate’ it, and made it serve their plans. They maintain themselves as the Tsar did, by the same procedures, by military force supporting police force, by the same means of the old *Druzhina*, the corps of volunteers, the ‘fighting organisation’

sustaining the Tyrant. And like the Tsar, imitators of the ancient tyrants Periander of Corinth and Tarquin the Etruscan, Lenin and Trotsky have managed to defeat everything that has stood against them. They are the only public force.

Thus for three years at least the Communist government has appeared, and with effect, as the state in Russian eyes. Every honest commentator in Russia and even in the emigration, every honest foreigner coming back from Russia, says that the government of the Communists is the only one acceptable to the vast majority of Russians, the only one with the personnel capable eventually of restoring the measureless empire; the purest Russian patriots prefer to see this regime evolve of itself towards more humane forms of political and moral and economic life. No one any longer wants to risk a White counter-revolution. The massacres of Denikin and Wrangel prove that the latter would be even more atrocious and chaotic, and more immoral, than Bolshevism.

3 How Bolshevism is explicable by the state of war

But Bolshevism, master of Russia and of the Revolution, was not master of its own fate. It was acted on more than it was actor, it was the toy and not the experimenter. More than any other post-War government, it has been unable to follow in peace a path it had traced out for itself. Here, even the coldest of historians, the most concerned to restrict himself to description, the most objective of sociologists, the most abstract of philosophers must resort to moral terms and agree that, up to a certain point, the Bolsheviks have an excuse. For to forget that up to the end of 1920 they were living in a state of war is to be unjust to them.

The foreign war was not over when they took power. Until Brest-Litovsk they had to maintain some kind of front. The treaty with Germany did not bring them peace with the latter. The Germans' advance into the Ukraine, to Kuban, to the Caucasus, in Finland, only ceased when the assassination of their ambassador in Moscow^f — and the first Allied victories — restored them slightly to their senses.

But at the same time, the Soviets — for there were Soviets then — had to conduct another defensive war, a civil war against the Whites and a foreign war against the Allies.

The latter denied and still deny that they replaced the alliance with Russia with a state of war. This is a fiction and a lie. They treated Bolshevik Russia as an enemy. They committed hostile acts less violent than those of a war to the death like the last, but they did commit them. The English sank ships and occupied Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, and penetrated fairly deeply into the

Northern gubernias, while their expeditions on the left bank of the Caspian — in the oil fields — took over from the Germans. The French and the English blockaded the Black Sea ports, and the French bombarded Odessa, risking divisions there — after the Armistice — even without the legitimate motive of pursuing the Germans, to whom Hetman Skoropadski — in French pay — had quietly handed over the Ukraine and his fantastic and expensive army. The Japanese took Vladivostok and Sakhalin, which island they still hold.¹⁰ All diplomatic links were broken, and a strict blockade imposed, which was only relaxed about the end of 1920.

So much for the Allies. What about the nations the Bolsheviks had emancipated, showing a touch of political brilliance which was to remain in their armoury? War with Finland ending only late in 1919, war with Estonia and Lithuania, bases of Yudenich's armies and of a German plot; war with Poland, the centre of French plots and Savinkov — this war was only ended at Riga in 1921 —; a war with the Causasian republics, a war which, for once, was clearly a war of aggression on the Russians' part, in Georgia and Azerbaidjan, as was the war in Turkestan (after 1921).⁸

As is well known, all these wars had a rather comic or mediaeval aspect; except for the war with Poland, they found only a feeble echo in the people and the army. They were often chaotically conducted. On the other hand, they were frequently conducted in the name of Russia, in the name of a nationalism or even a patriotism — moreover a respectable patriotism — and not in virtue of the principles of the Russian Revolution, which is internationalist in the best sense of the word. This is true. But it required an iron will to fight on all fronts like this, to obtain the troops, to get them to fight, to guarantee them against traitors. There was a perpetual crisis, in which the Communists really did save their country, after so nearly destroying it. They have much more than the excuse of their valid motive, they also have that of the successful effect of their actions. Even where their internal regime is concerned, their reasons must be perceived, for a nation at war cannot, on pain of disappearance, tolerate the freedom and respect for all rights that are the privilege of a state of peace.

More atrocious than the foreign wars — which were heroic, after all — was the civil war.

Russians have no fear of death, still less of inflicting it. There were many painful episodes and comic switches: white cities yielding to Red vanguards; Red cities and divisions slaughtering their commissars at the rumour of a *sotnia* of Denikin's cossacks and turning White immediately; whole countrysides passing easily, smoothly and comfortably from Kolchak or Denikin to the Soviets and from the latter to Kolchak, sometimes three or four

times; for the extremes of susceptibility of the Slav allows such volte-faces. But on the whole, the military *chouannerie* of Kolchak, Denikin, Yudenich and Wrangel — not to speak of that of the Siberian brigands, of Semyonov, or of the 'Greens', the Ukrainian peasants, the mountaineers of Anti-Caucasia and the cossacks of the steppe — committed more crime, more frequently, more uselessly, more barbarously, more savagely and more deliberately than did the immense jacquerie that the Russian Revolution ultimately is. The expeditions of these defeated generals, especially those of their lieutenants, even more those of their detachments, sometimes amounting to no more than two officers, were raids by 'Great Companies' against expeditions, requisitionists, foragers even; for such were the troops of the Soviets in 1919 and the beginning of 1920. No moderation: these isolated and opposed bands moving through these immense spaces and rarely making contact only did so to yield to one another and then to incorporate their prisoners — or massacre them. Above all, they could only live on the country by 'eating' it, as the Russians say; they could only control the cities and obtain supplies of horses and food from the peasants by the most abject terror. The Russians of both sides made civil war mostly on the innocent.

To 'be fair, the Whites' war, too, has its excuses. Started by the Czechoslovak legions, faithful to the Allies who later became the liberators of their country, then led by the kind of rump Constituent Assembly formed at Omsk,^h it had a certain nobility at the outset. Unfortunately it soon left behind the purity of its original intentions. Kolchak, surrounded by others like him, the most ferocious, unscrupulous and reckless reactionaries, exiled those ministers, his former colleagues, who got in his way and had shot or stuffed under the ice anyone suspected of belonging to their party. Trickery, disorder, illegality disillusioned even the honest Siberians, the cream of Russia. In the European gubernias, his troops, unable to join up with those of Denikin, distinguished themselves as did they by useless massacres, breaches of faith, cowardly desertions, costly requisitions, lack of morality. Expelled from European Russia, in six months Kolchak managed to lose Siberia, and he came to a sorry end, despite the heroic retreat of a portion of his soldiers whom he had decided not to follow so as to be sure to flee more quickly.

Denikin, a reactionary court general in heart and mind, a cavalier rather than a soldier, was, all the same, inspired at the outset by patriotic motives, like Kolchak; his revolt, supported by the cossacks of the Don and of Kuban, liberated Southern Russia, Trans-Caucasia and the Ukraine from German hands, into which they had been delivered by the self-styled Hetman Skoropadski,

whom the Entente had seen as an ally. But when he thought he was about to gain the upper hand, when his scouts penetrated to within 200 kilometres of Moscow, while he no longer had the excuse of the War abroad, ended at Versailles, he lost his head; his noble officers repossessed noble lands, even those of which they were not the proprietors; he massacred the Jews in the Ukraine, the intellectuals in a hundred places, he squeezed the peasants, he abused and molested even his own cossacks. His army, defeated, 'sent him to Limoges', as one would say in France; and the daring Wrangel could only carry the debris into emigration, unable as they were to defend even the impregnable Crimea. The resistance of the Republic of Arkhangelsk (1918–1919), on the other hand, was honourable to the end.¹ Yudenich's army, on the contrary, was only a force of adventurers, supported cynically by the Baltic nations, the Germans and the Entente. His raid towards Petrograd had only one effect, to legitimise a horrible Terror in that city. It is only a little while since Siberia has at last been purged of the brigand Semyonov.

These are the wars, civil and foreign, which the Bolsheviks have had to confront. And I shall merely mention their expeditions against Turkestan and Ferghana, their recapture of the oil fields, their expulsion of the English from the Caspian, their assistance to the Soviets of the Ukraine. If one wants to understand and judge Bolshevism, it must be realised that, depending on a horde of demobilised soldiers and then conscripts that it managed to transform into an army, it was able nonetheless to rid the Russian state of the overgrown gangs which, under the pretext of upholding the law, were devastating and disunifying the country. In fact it was the Bolsheviks who were the representatives of order and national unity.

And, on the other hand, in order to understand this whole phase, the first three years of the Bolshevik regime, up to the Treaty of Riga, it must be realised that the whole revolution was conducted in a state of war. Like the French Revolution, like the Commune, it is a matter not just of states of crisis, but also of states of real collective madness, of 'siege psychosis' as it is called: states of societies in decomposition possessing only the soul of a crowd: entire populations, baffled and maddened, discover spies and traitors everywhere; they oscillate from irrational hope to limitless depression, massacring and allowing themselves to be slaughtered in succession, and demonstrating heroism one day, cowardice the next. Even the herd instinct declines. When famine, epidemic, fear, massacres and raids are added to this, then friendships and families themselves disappear. Thus, supreme horror, cannibalism re-emerged during the Russian famine when it had no

longer existed anywhere for a long time except among the most savage of living savages.

The Allies' material blockade, the *de facto* moral, juridical and commercial blockade that followed this *de jure* blockade, has maintained this mental state in the whole Russian collectivity. And as the Soviets, or rather the Communist Party, have been able to take advantage of and perpetuate this moral isolation of a whole nation, as they have, as it were, caged it up, without news, without a press, without freedom of assembly, as they have been able to avoid the elementary oversight of power exercised by public and especially overseas opinion; as they have been able to make the Russian masses believe they are still at war with rampant reaction and foreign capitalism, even foreign countries; as everything which is not the state has been destroyed and the state still confronts only a soulless and inconsistent mass, for all these reasons the Bolshevik 'experiment' does not seem to me to be proceeding in normal conditions or developing autonomously, in a nation conscious of itself and morally and materially healthy. Of course there is no such thing as a normal crisis — and there would have to be discussion as to the definition of the word 'normal' — there is no such thing as a revolution — another word needing definition — which has not been produced in mental states of this kind or has failed to produce them; but there is a difference between a transitional crisis, rapidly overcome by a sound organism, adapted to its environment, and the ruin, the madness of a great people, besieged, cut off from its essential relations with the world, feeling neither within nor without the sympathy that carries societies through their crises and makes them emerge from them with glory like the England of the Protestants, the America of the Colonists and the France of the Constituents and Conventionals.

A partial conclusion can already be drawn: *Bolshevism is only one phase of the Russian Revolution*, a dark but necessary one — if the last adjective, too, has any meaning — as Jacobinism was to the French Revolution; but *it is only partly the result of its authors' actions*. Even less is it the product of a clear will, of the action of a strong nation ripe for socialism. But socialism is obviously impossible if it is not willed; it is not durable if the will that it is — the will to control economic life — does not constantly inspire the nation. This socialism, this 'experiment' lacks the essential feature: will. Russia did not will it and does not yet will it, even if there is nothing else it does will. Hence the present failure of Bolshevism.

This failure must now be described, its causes must be investigated, we must discover to what extent socialism has emerged

from this involuntary event, Bolshevism, in disrepute or intact as a practical ideal.

Notes

† We publish these texts in their logical order as described by Mauss (E&S).

* Originally published as 'Socialisme et Bolchévisme' in *Le Monde Slave*, Year 2 number 2, February 1925, pp. 201–222.

1. Marcel Mauss, Director of Studies for Religions of Non-Civilised Peoples at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes-Etudes and editor of *L'Année Sociologique*, is one of the leaders of the new French school of sociology and the closest and most faithful disciple of Emile Durkheim. . . . *The Editors* [of *Le Monde Slave*].

2. The word *Bolshevism* comes from *Bolshevik*, a word which, thanks to the great flexibility of Russian, designates two ideas in turn. First, that of Majoritarianism, as opposed to the Minoritarians, or *Mensheviks*, another fraction of the Social-Democratic Party put into a minority by Lenin and led by Plekhanov, Martov and others. Then, as these Majoritarians were also maximalists, partisans of the immediate realisation of the maximum programme, and as this word can also be translated by *Bolshevik*, the word *Bolshevism* was coined after the Russian Revolution of March 1917 to designate the maximalism of that Party; similarly, the word *Menshevism* no longer connotes anything but the idea of minimalism, and the fact of the split has been forgotten.^l

3. Moreover, one should distinguish, even within this doctrine, both phases and currents running in opposite directions. For example, Bolshevism has had two policies towards the anarchists and their communism. During the first three years, the Bolsheviks allied themselves with the anarchists and nihilists; they even made the sympathy and support of these groups one of the signs of the sincerity of the various sections of the Communist International (Theses of the Third Congress of the Communist International, Moscow 1921). Then, growing more and more governmental and statist, the Russian Bolsheviks broke with the anarchists of their own country and began to accuse the tendencies of certain of the associated Parties of utopianism and 'infantile malady'.^k

4. There is no point in my citing any of this literature here; few events have inspired such a vast one, from so many points of view, or such a good one. Unfortunately, few of the books and articles published in France are really impartial. The only exception I would make is for the 'Extracts from the Russian Press' collated and published by the *Bulletin de Presse* of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 1917. They constitute a first-class and excellently selected collection of documents.

5. 'Ich habe mit den Begriffen kokettiert' — Marx: Preface to the Second Edition of *Capital*.^l

6. Formulations equivalent to these of mine here are attributed to Camille Huysmans, then Secretary of the Second International, in an interview with Bolshevik delegates at Stockholm.

7. Krylenko at the trial of the Revolutionary Socialists.^m

8. I refer here to a definition of the notion of Revolution which I will justify elsewhere.

9. The United States of North America.

10. Since this was written it has been restored to Russia under the terms of the recent Russo-Japanese Treaty. — *The Editors*.ⁿ

A sociological assessment of Bolshevism*

Introduction to the Chapter of Conclusions

This chapter is the last from a short book in which I have tried, as Comte, and also Renouvier, would put it, to 'assess' (*apprécier*) a serious current event: the Bolshevik phase of the Russian Revolution. By an assessment I mean quite simply, setting aside any preconceived notions of morals or philosophy of history, or of politics, an attempt to measure what is new and indispensable, I do not say good and bad, in the contribution of a social event to the series of social facts of which it is a part; these facts or systems of facts having themselves to be considered without any teleology. Within what limits does the Bolshevik experiment, as the Communists themselves call it, advance Russian society towards new forms of social life? To what extent do its results allow us to think that it is towards forms of this kind that our Western nations will direct themselves? That is all I am concerned to retain from an analysis of this gigantic social convulsion.

However, as this book is part of a set of works not of pure sociology but of 'political science' or, if you prefer, 'applied sociology', this 'assessment' includes practical conclusions such as politics expects, without the postponements that science can allow itself with impunity, but which are intolerable for action. It is these precepts, mingled with more or less general theoretical observations, that I give here. I add to this some indications to the general politics, others would say philosophy of law, though they are definitely intended for practice; and finally I close with some principles, lessons in political methodology, in the logic of that art, which, I believe, can be derived from the analysis of this major social experiment.

I hope to publish the whole work soon. Meanwhile allow me to detach in advance these pages and separate them from the array of evidence they presuppose; allow me to indicate the headings under which the full work will present that evidence.

The chapter titles will suffice to suggest the movement of the demonstration. I. Introduction; II. To What Extent Was the Bolshevik Experiment an Experiment? and, To What Extent Was it a Socialist Experiment? III. The Terrorist Phase; IV. The Moral Failure; V. The Economic Failure; VI. The New Phase: The New Economy; VII. The Political Success: Formation of a Modern Russian State; VIII. Conclusions (which are given here).

Conclusions

I Indications as to descriptive sociology and positive politics

En route, I have thus drawn several theoretical and practical lessons from this long study of Bolshevism in its first and second forms. Let me briefly recapitulate them, in no particular order, counterposing the principles illuminated both to the doctrines of Bolshevism and to various other political doctrines. Other conclusions will then be drawn in turn from this recapitulation.

I. Despite all the appearances under which it seeks to lay claim to

realism and empiricism, *Bolshevism is not 'an experiment'*. It is an event, a phase of the Russian Revolution, or, rather, following the Kerensky regime (the first phase), it constitutes its second, 'Communist' phase and its third phase, the 'New Stage'. This Revolution was an involuntary one. It was born of war, misery and of the fall of a regime. As a Social Revolution, it thus faced the worst possible conditions: the society it inherited was a bankrupt society. Worse still was the way it made the takeover. It was the work of a jacquerie of peasants and soldiers. But for a socialist regime to be practically and firmly founded, there must first of all be things to socialise, and there were none. The takeover must also be carried out in the maximum order, and there was none.

But above all the regime must be willed, the takeover must be conscious and organised in perfect clarity by considerable numbers, if not the unanimity or a very large majority of the enlightened citizenry. A regime, even a popular one, which is imposed on the nation, may be able to implant itself at first and then force its acceptance; it may eventually become socialist; but it is not so in its inmost heart because it has not been so from the outset. In fact, the tyranny of the workers and soldiers was not and is not necessarily and in essence more social and less anti-social than that of the aristocrats, officers and bourgeois.

Hence it can be said that a socialist society born out of a catastrophe comes into the world in unfavourable conditions and that a regime, even a socialist one, inspired by a minority will never be as good as any kind of regime which has been willed. *Socialism, by definition, must be the work of the 'general will' of the citizens.*

II *Every Social Revolution must take a national character.* This is proved by the serious disadvantages to the Soviets in, first, the repudiation of Russia's foreign debts and then the confiscation without compensation of the property of foreign nationals. The international blockade and boycott that followed were the consequences of these two serious mistakes.⁹ Thus, if a state has the right to apply the laws it has adopted itself to its nationals and also to apply them to those foreigners who visit it or choose to reside within its territory, it is also bound, however, to avoid any appearance of injustice and infringement of those tacit international contracts: public and private international law. It follows that expropriations must cease at the frontier, and, in the interior, at the rights of foreign persons or legal entities insofar as they trade in the country by virtue of usages predating the Revolution.

Complete expropriation is only understandable in the event of a universal and simultaneous Social Revolution. Such a Revolution could indeed abolish everywhere and at once, for nations and for individuals, all international debts and credits, private or public.

It may be argued that this observation proves both nationalism and internationalism. Whichever you wish, for there is no middle ground; *socialisations without compensation are only possible within the limits of the nation and can only be total if they are extended to the whole human race or, at least, to the most important nations that make it up.*

III *The second, Communist and Terrorist period of the Russian Revolution is not strictly speaking socialist.* Bolshevism has remained in certain respects sub-socialist; in others it has developed independently of socialism or gone beyond it; in others, finally, it has led to real regressions.

In the countryside it only put into practice an individualist revolution of the type of the French Revolution: all it did was to allow the peasants to share out the land. Either it simply restricted their appetites by ineffective and remote laws proclaiming the pre-eminent national ownership of the land;^p or else it only added to this individualistic policy a state communism manifested in severe requisitions and exactions often even of a military nature; the latter were not understood by the peasants and discouraged them. These two contradictory attitudes eventually led to a reduction in the area of cultivated land and the disappearance of stocks, and then to famine.

It is in their industrial legislation that the Soviets were most socialist, so long as they seriously attempted to transfer the ownership and management of the nationalised industries to professional groups.^q But this period was quickly over. Subsequently, panic-stricken by the failure, they allowed big industries to dissolve to the advantage of small industry and the artisanate and, to this extent, the Russian economy has returned to outdated forms of industrial property and technique; — or else they have attempted to install via 'labour armies', 'national trusts', etc., a regime of production which is no longer socialist and syndicalist, but communist and statist: the producer being guaranteed all his consumption, but tied to a profession which he no longer organises himself.

This individualism and this statism were among the causes of the moral and material failure of the Soviets. They deprived themselves of the necessary moral instrument: they subjected the professional group to violence and terror; they almost destroyed it; they weakened the group which should par excellence be both the means of revolution, the real agent of production, and the real title-holder to property, and they thus missed their mark: the collective organisation of production.

Finally, their most serious error was to install communism and not socialism where consumption is concerned: for example,

communism in housing, the object of individual consumption par excellence; for example, again, communism in the distribution of foodstuffs. Admittedly, rationing was imposed on them by the circumstances, blockade and famine. However, we should note that it is in general an economic device that European societies cannot tolerate.

In all this series of facts, socialism can only be held responsible for the abortive attempt at the management of factories by the workers' councils.

Everywhere else it was other systems, clear regressions to individualism or, more backward still, to communism, that are responsible for the errors made or the triumph of archaic economic forms.

IV Communism of consumption is absurd and should be proscribed from practice. *But what was even more absurd* is the fact that, in order to establish it, *it was necessary to destroy the essential constituent of the economy itself, i.e., the market.*

For, strictly speaking, it is conceivable that production be regulated up to the point goods reach the market, even including stocks; it is also even conceivable that it might be of value to set limits to consumption, allowing neither waste nor avarice. But a society without markets is inconceivable. By markets I do not mean the market places, exchanges and so on that are their external signs, I simply mean the economic fact that prices are publicly self-determining via alternative prices freely 'supplied and demanded' -- in other words, the legal fact that everyone 'on the spot' has the right to buy what he wants in peace and with confidence in his title, and also that no one can be forced to buy what he does not want. This market system, which has grown up slowly in the economic history of mankind, currently governs a very large part of production and consumption. Of course, other systems of social facts contribute to the same function and further new ones are conceivable which could so contribute effectively, but freedom of the market is the absolutely necessary precondition of economic life. It may be a matter of regret, not only for doctrinaire socialists, the Communists, and distinguished economists such as Thorstein Veblen, but it must be admitted that the Soviets have not been able to 'escape from the price system'. It is thus not certain that any known society is equipped to take off for other spheres. For the moment and for as long as one can foresee, *socialism — communism — must seek its path in the organisation and not the suppression of the market.*

V Most socialist doctrines predict, rather abruptly and vaguely, that the society of the future will be able to dispense with money. The Communist experiment has proved the opposite. Even in a

country where, per capita, capital and monetary circulation were as low as can be before the War, the attempt to do without them was futile; it was necessary to return to a gold-based currency. The equally striking examples of Mexico, Austria, then Germany and soon Poland prove and will prove that contemporary societies, whether they are as backward as Mexico and Russia or as highly civilised as Germany, have as yet no confidence in anything but gold, or credits representing gold, or commodities negotiable in gold. Gold and the various certificates that represent it are still the only guarantees the individual has of the freedom of his purchases.

Are the peoples who think in this way right or wrong? That is another question. As far as I am concerned, I do not think there can, for a long time, be a purely rational society. Neither our language nor our technology, not to speak of other social facts such as law or religion, are or for a long time will be cleared of irrationality and sentiment, prejudices and mere routine. Why should one expect the domain of the economy, the domain of needs and tastes, to be one of pure reason? Why should one expect that a world with such crazy values, where a clown's buffoonery is worth as much as the patents of the finest inventions, why should one expect that world suddenly to abandon its scale of values, the instrument, however faulty, of its calculations (*ratio*), the element, however absurd, of its reason? Why should that world suddenly be governed by the fairy tale of the masses' intelligence or the intelligence imposed on them by the magic and force of a Communist elite?

Hence it is better to start from what currently exists and attempt to superimpose on it more and more reasonable forms: to order, restrict, suppress the privileges of the dealers in money, to transfer them to the collectivity, *to organise the latter so that it can be the main distributor of credit*. Moreover, at the moment the Soviets seem to be moving in this direction, with their state banks and savings banks.

VI Not only freedom of the market, but also *industrial and commercial freedom are an indispensable ambience for any modern economy*. Statism and bureaucracy, or the authoritarian direction of industry, the legislation of production, on the one hand, administrative rationing of consumption on the other, in a word, all of what Herbert Spencer would have called 'military' economics, are opposed to the 'exchangist nature' of modern man. The latter does not usually work for himself, but he still only works and exchanges in order to obtain the best product or service at the cheapest price, or to sell his goods or his labour at the highest price.

The market, production (remember that I always include circu-

lation in this term) and consumption can be regulated and are already regulated in the West: by private contracts, trusts and workers' unions and employers' associations; or by agreement among consumers (co-operatives); or by agreement between industrialists, financiers and traders; or by public law and regulation; or by organisations combining cartelised capitalism and statism.¹

But there are limits beyond which even a socialist society cannot go. These are reached when the services or wealth provided, instead of being paid for after negotiation, are required; and when the kind, quantity and quality of the objects of consumption supplied to the public are determined sovereignly by others than individuals or their freely constituted associations (consumption co-operatives, for example).

Hence socialist societies can only be built up beyond and alongside a certain amount of individualism and liberalism, especially where economic affairs are concerned. This thesis will not surprise the Proudhonians and even among Marxists it will shock only those mad enough to extend to consumption the notion of collective appropriation. This limit is respected even by the summary 'shibboleths' of the Parties. The latter only predict the 'socialisation of the means of production and exchange'; and, on the other hand, 'collective appropriation' does not necessarily mean appropriation by the state, or state tyranny, or the tyranny of the collective vis-à-vis smaller collectivities which have not been constituted as proprietors. Inversely, alongside and in addition to the freedom of individuals — freedom to change co-operative or trade, to administer one's own consumption, etc. — there is room for a further commercial and industrial freedom: that of the collectivities themselves, co-operatives, professional groups, etc. Here again, the terms 'freedom' and 'collective control' are not contradictory.

VII To respect those intermediary collectivities and to develop those institutions already present in most Western societies, these are thus essential, or at least wise and prudent concerns in any epoch of transition to a socialist regime. Perhaps it will be necessary to preserve them. In particular, Durkheim's hypotheses about the moral and economic value of the professional group emerge further confirmed from the Bolshevik test. The Soviets failed precisely because they undermined and destroyed this primordial organisational element.

Of course, it is not absolutely certain that what Durkheim, long before anyone else, called 'institutional socialism', is the necessary and sufficient form of all socialism. Even the Bolshevik failure by no means proves that one must necessarily wait until these groups

are very strong and their possible and complete evolution has come to an end, in order to attempt a social reform. But at any rate, there is a serious danger in neglecting these institutions.

Above all, it is certain that socialisations must no longer be conceived in a single form: that of the state or that of the profession. Lenin has admitted that he was wrong about co-operation.² The hopes he now pins on the latter prove how wrong it is to combat free competition in the name of communism — or obligatory co-operation.

The way all free institutions have been fought and all management administrations have been destroyed is also an error.

VIII *The New Economic Policy in Russia today is leading to a mixture of capitalism, statism, administrative socialism, free collectivities and even individualism.*

Russian Communism has shifted from the attack to the defensive. All its efforts are now devoted to combatting the artisanal and peasant petty bourgeoisie it has created in its own despite. It would like to be able to hang on to the state's rights, to defend collective industrial property and the industrial workers against the foreign capitalism to which it appeals in vain or with which it associates whenever it can. A task in which it is to a certain extent successful.

In the end, socialism over there is simply superimposed onto a modern society which is coming into being . . . at last, with its usual mechanisms: money, credit, state; with individual ownership by individual producers: artisans and peasants; with state ownership, collective or semi-collective ownership of big industry; finally with true public services.

In its latest form, the Communist regime has thus returned to what I would regard as the socialist norm. On the one hand, it super-adds a form of property to the other forms; on the other, legitimately, I believe, it 'sub-adds' — if I am permitted the neologism — it underpins individual possession, even that of the peasantry, with a pre-eminent right of the nation. Broadly speaking this is the fictional right found especially in England, where all tenure is held from the King, and this should be the rule elsewhere, and not just fictional either.

I need not repeat that there was no need to revolutionise Russia to such an extent to reach this position, and that our Western societies can easily be perfected in the same sense. Let me conclude: there as here, *Socialism should not consist in the suppression of all the forms of property, replacing them with one alone, but in the addition to the rest of a certain number of rights: those of the professional group, those of the local group, those of the nation, etc.* Naturally, rights which contradict the new ones

will have to have an effect on the system of rights; for, obviously, the perpetual right of inheritance or the individual right to the incremental value of land, for example, cannot co-exist with any kind of socialism. Besides, those additions and suppressions actually achieved by the Soviets doubtless constitute the most solid part of their work. Would to God they had done nothing else!

Thus, to follow the excellent formulation proposed by Emmanuel Lévy, but deriving from Lassalle: 'Socialism is Capitalism minus established rights.'³

II Conclusions as to general politics

But, over and above questions about socialism, there are others of general politics for which the events of Bolshevism bring us new evidence, if not new light; questions of principle debated at length since the establishment of the political sciences and of the art of politics, of rational morals and social science, questions which are still at stake in the most recent social doctrines: the question of the use of force and violence, the question of the power of decrees and laws.

I *The Dangers of Violence Elsewhere*⁴ I have set out at length the observations that can be drawn from the systematic use that the Bolsheviks have made of violence. All I have to add to this here is to note its failure. The Communists, here followers of Georges Sorel,⁵ have turned it into a true political 'myth', an article of faith. Not only does the whole Third International regard it as the revolutionary means par excellence; not only do the Communists advocate it as the means of conclusively establishing the Revolution that has already been made and of applying the laws laid down by a dictator proletariat, it has also become for them a kind of end in itself. They have set up a kind of fetish figure in honour of force, the 'midwife of societies' (Marx).[†] As the Communists seized power violently, as they exercise it violently, as anyway it was always part of the Bolshevik programme and not an improvisation, they have made the exercise of violence the infallible sign of proletarian power and of the Revolution. They only recognise Communism where they see violence and terror.

They have confused the midwife and the baby. In the end these big words are just a defence of their own governmental device. Even this device is not specifically Communist, rather specifically Russian, Byzantine and ancient. Their acts of violence, their will, their intrigues having triumphed, having then maintained themselves in power by terror, police and spying, they think their theories

have been verified and have taken their violence as a manifestation and a thaumaturgy of the new and powerful Social Republic; they believe that it was that violence that inaugurated a new society; they therefore recommend it to their Third International.

Rarely in history have a party and the theoreticians of a party been so mistaken about themselves. In fact, what violence has created in Russia is only a new political form. What the Bolsheviks imposed on the Russian people is not a new society, it is a modern state, a Russian state. And it is indeed understandable that a government, a minority should impose itself by force and violence. To this extent violence is a normal device which has succeeded elsewhere as it has succeeded for them, and I would not claim that its employment has been totally disastrous.

But Bolshevik violence, inevitable counterpart to the old violence of the Tsars, was only beneficial to the extent that it destroyed the old evil. For, while it was tearing all sorts of rottenness from the social fabric, it also removed whole chunks of that fabric and crushed masses of ideas beneath the debris. It killed the living as well.

In vain would one seek for anything created by Bolshevik violence outside the political domain. On the contrary, it can be said with some certainty that it was that violence that led the Soviets to ruin. If we accept that the violence used against counter-revolutionaries can be justified, the Bolsheviks' crime was to use it against the whole nation. Consider the violence thanks to which obedience was to be extracted from the workers, manual and intellectual, those of the towns and those of the countryside. Its only effect went entirely against what was hoped for from it. Instead of bringing into being a new world, a new economy, it hindered its arrival. First, in sectarian spirit, the Bolsheviks persecuted, massacred, exiled and are still exiling all those socialists they are pleased to regard as moderate in comparison with themselves. They thus deprived themselves of their natural auxiliaries. A Social Revolution can never have too many supporters. Secondly, the discipline they inflicted on proletarians and peasants was really stupid. Ill will at work and in exchange, often dishonesty, that is what they conjured up. Good work is not done to order, except in the face of an enemy . . . and even then! 'Labour is a friend only of peace' runs an old adage; let us add of freedom, for slavery and serfdom never produce high yields. Peremptory commands and violence to ensure that they are carried out anger, frighten and encourage duplicity among the weak who attempt to skive, or else they encourage passive resistance and laziness among those who know they can only be pushed about so far, and who hope to wear down their masters, no matter how much the latter

may be in the right. The Bolsheviks' violence led to a general retraction of the nation, of the productive forces and creativity of the country.

In contrast with this, the Communists' 'New Economic Policy' has led them, on the contrary, as we have seen, to a certain success. Slowly, after the terror, the Russian Revolutionaries are gradually allowing the people to work out their customs (*moeurs*) and their laws. They are establishing a 'New Stage' whether they recognise it or not, they are in a third phase of the Revolution, one in which violence is only used to defend the regime and in which that regime is left to create itself. I am well aware of the fact that as I write Moscow's internal politics is still torn between a variety of tendencies and cliques. But, let us hope, let us devoutly augur, they will perhaps arrive at a fourth phase, one in which they will no longer use violence for its own sake, but only for the sanctity of the laws. In November 1923 there are to be elections for the local Soviets in anticipation of the forthcoming All-Russian Congress and the formation of the new dual Executive Committee, that of the Russian Soviets and that of the Federation of Soviet Republics.⁵ It seems that the 'Communist Party' has allowed a small number of places to 'non-party' delegates. Will it continue in this direction? It might gradually restore to the people the responsibility to run their affairs in peace via the Soviets or in some other way that they choose. In this milder political climate, in this infinitely less violent and tyrannical phase, in this 'New Policy', a real Russian renaissance has begun. It can be said that Russia is returning to life precisely insofar as peace, order and confidence flourish anew in it.

This opposition suggests a morality of mildness and legalism; I should say: *Violence is only legitimate via the law, via the legal order whose reign it supports: it is not itself order, still less faith.* On the one hand, in a proper politics there must be no constraint other than that of the laws, and force must only be used in the application of sanctions; and, on the other, a new social order can only be set up in order and enthusiasm. The builders of future societies will thus be well advised to resort to violence only in the last extremity. It is the enemy of labour, the destroyer of hope, of belief in oneself and others, i.e., of all that which, alongside need, makes men work. There are very many invisible bonds that tie individuals together into societies, which bind contracts, confidences, credits, *res et rationes contractae*. This is the humus in which germinates the desire to satisfy others, growing as one's confidence in them grows.

All Russian life in the last six years proves it; terror does not bind, terror does not encourage; it makes people keep their

heads down, withdraw into themselves, shun the terrorists and each other, panic and not work: *Metus ac terror sunt infirma vincla caritatis*, 'Fear and terror are weak links of friendship', as Tacitus has it,⁶ a formula that should be repeated *via-à-vis* the first Socialist government in history. Strictly speaking they do keep states and tyrannies going; but they create neither human charity nor love, or, if you prefer, ultimately, devotion. But no society is more in need of inspiring positive sentiments than one claiming to be a society of workers each devoting himself to all the others.

Societies of this form will never be built on material force alone. At the risk of seeming old-fashioned and a purveyor of commonplaces, let me appeal once again to the old Greek and Latin concepts of *caritas*, for which the modern 'charity' is such a poor translation, and of the *φίλον* and *κοινων*,⁷ the necessary 'friendship', the 'community' that constitute the delicate essence of the City.

II *Dangers of the fetishism of politics, weak effectivity of laws.*

Not only was violence merely destructive in itself alone, even when it accompanied the law the two of them together were often inadequate; indeed, in many cases the Bolsheviks only used violence quite legally, in the service of the law, of their laws. But it is certain that, even when backed up by violence, law proved powerless when it was not supported by customs or modelled on sufficiently strong or sufficiently traditional social practices.

Thus it was the Bolsheviks' fetishism of politics even more than their violence that led to their defeat. Their adventure provides striking proof of this other moral lesson in politics. They did indeed make laws: '*prikazy*', '*ukazy*', decrees or orders of the People's Commissars or of the TsIK (Executive Committee), or laws of the Congress of Soviets; the precise name Russian public law gives to its enactments is unimportant, but it is certain that the Bolsheviks promulgated and even codified social rules worthy of the name laws. If I have my reservations as to their legislative capacity and consistency, I have none as to their status as legislators, legal organs of national sovereignty. For the last six years there has been no other state in Russia than the Communists' state; they have acted as the regular government of their country; it might even be said that they have only too slavishly followed the old traditions Byzantium directly passed on to the Russian autocracy, according to which the law is simply 'the Prince's word'. They have even been supported, at least for three out of the six years, by the regular, elected

authority of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets. The opposite has been maintained, but only hypocritically. European and American polemicists, whose countries manipulate plebiscites or are notorious for rigged elections, are in no position to treat all Russian elections as a joke. They are more genuine than the elections of . . . The All-Russian Congress and the Executive Committee of the Soviets are hardly more machines of tyranny or the expression of class interests than were the parliaments elected by property-owners of constitutions before the introduction of universal suffrage. When primary elections are secret and free; when the bonus of three-quarters of the seats is no longer given to urban Soviets as opposed to rural ones;^f when the Commissars of the gubernias, the towns and the people, when the Communists have renounced practices worthy of Spanish caciques and Fascist ras; when freedom of assembly and the press have been restored, the constitution and legislative authority of the Soviets will be no worse than many others. They are already as good as those of most nations that have not reached the level of maturity of ours.

But it is very remarkable that even these legitimately applied laws have been relatively powerless to create a communist society. First, those that were obeyed were almost all laws of prohibition and not laws of administration or regulations of the practice of production. In most cases it was more the fear of violence and severe sanctions that really prevented actions contrary to the law; in others it was relatively easy to observe the law, because it did not consist in doing something but rather in not doing it. Laws positively expressed may only be negative in effect: e.g., the laws of socialisation. They were observed in Russia because they had the effect rather of destroying one ownership or one form of trade and contract than of creating new ones, and because the defenders of those legal forms had been defeated in the class war. It is always easier not to do than to do. These decisions run along a line of least resistance. For example, the decrees of the Soviets applying the great principle 'He who does not work, neither shall he eat', are really quite simple: they consist in giving smaller rations or none at all to former bourgeois; laws of this kind can be imposed even with rather little moral authority, but only on condition they are purely negatory.

On the contrary, where the law was supposed to cause things to be done, above all in administration, management, it has been powerless. Workers' councils, national trusts, Soviet administration at all levels, especially that of the towns; consumers' communes; the Economic Council of People's Commissars, all these various

economic institutions have failed in their functions. Labour bonds, consumption bonds, three successive kinds of paper ruble in all their issues and more, all these liberating instruments have one after another fallen to the lowest possible value, until at last the 'chernovets', a gold-based currency energetically defended by the Soviets, has at last avoided this *reductio ad absurdum*.¹¹ Promises of education, art, medical aid, food, machines and technical leadership have proved empty. The number of things that the Soviets or Communists had to do, imagined they had to do, believed they were doing or believed they had done and which were not done and in some cases had not even been attempted, is legion. The number of their velleities is still frightening.

Admittedly, there is something specifically Russian in all this enormous impotence, for organisation and realisation are hardly our friends' most brilliant aptitudes. But it has to be observed that, although most of the ends proposed have been very creditable, both all together and taken singly, and some of them seemed, to my eyes at least, perfectly attainable, the laws by which the People's Commissars thought to attain them were inapplicable and unapplied. They ran up against the incompetence of some and the ill will of others. What could be finer than workers' control? The body of workers must also be capable of exercising it. What could be simpler and more rational than the consumers' commune, a kind of obligatory consumers' co-operative? It must also be managed and supplied; it also needs competent staff and the faithful clientele who, although they may be obliged to come to it, will perhaps not come to it for all their provisions. Could anything be more democratic and juster than to give a complete education to every child according to its merit? But where were the teachers, the buildings, what were the curricula? which were the children, even? They were nearly all recruited in the towns and from that false proletariat, the Communist Party; so finally almost nothing was achieved.

Naive sociologists, the Communists believed that the order of sovereignty, the law, can create, like the Word of God, from nothing, *ex nihilo*. Transfixed by revolutionary dreams, they thought they could remould all human society, seeing themselves as copying the Constituents and Conventionals. They were greatly mistaken. The French revolutionaries never went beyond what was possible, and they were ready for the task: Pothier had taught them about the law; Condorcet had initiated them into education; Carnot and Monge guided them in industry, arts and crafts. They did not build a society from scratch or in the air; they had the material capital and moral strength required; they

possessed all the necessary leading personnel, and they were fervently supported by a patriotic people, sensible, already rich, enlightened and policed.

The Communists did not have the capital, nor the morality and the human knowhow required. That is why, despite their violence, despite their strength, despite their energy and their daring, despite their power, political power, they failed.

Once again, it must be repeated, law does not create, it sanctions. The decree may prescribe forms to action, it cannot either induce it or even easily provide incentives for it. The state and the law constrain and limit more than they encourage. Sometimes the law can express and sanction and inspire respect for, it can enhance, social practice. Only very rarely does it create it, in pure politics, the decision as to who is to be sovereign . . . and even then there are exceptions. In fact, most precepts of public or administrative law consist in prohibiting or at most designating the executive agent or the form to be taken by the carrying out of something, they do not consist in strictly commanding the necessity for an action. The latter is the prerogative of individuals; be they ministers, commissars, officials or soldiers, they are no more than the servants of the public or the guardians of the law. Action, whether economic, moral or otherwise, is not prescribed or is badly prescribed; it is done, and it is from practice that the rule is derived. That is why the finest laws have proved fruitless when they had not developed of themselves out of actions. That is why the law is only active when behind it there is a morality that it sanctions and a mentality that it translates; when a completely living society comes to express in its rhythms the hopes, expectations, strength, moral wisdom, practical knowhow and technique that it possesses.

'Labour bonds' cannot be imposed on a society that believes only in gold; some particular skill is useless to people who are miserable, or uneducated or isolated in remote villages, and here I am citing only examples of the bankruptcy of the Communist regime. Laws can only be reformed along with customs, and even customs can only be reformed insofar as technical and aesthetic habits, the tastes for labour and, *a fortiori*, needs have themselves been transformed. It may even be the case that to proceed by law and on the basis of law and morality is to proceed less quickly and less surely than to let time and things act of themselves. Most laws must therefore lag behind customs. When a few are ahead of them they can only create the environment in which new generations, breaking with old practices, will work out new forms of action. In these

cases, the laws are simply long-term ones; they must leave a long time for action to produce their fruits. Hence we should cease to believe in the omnipotence of the state and of laws; legislative miracles must be banished from politics in our modern societies. This art has as yet no experience of the wonder cures and the astounding surgical operations our practitioners are already able to carry out on the living body.

We should therefore cease repeating that the 'political seizure of power' is a panacea for all ills. 'Seizure of power': around 1846, Proudhon and Marx himself meant by that simply universal suffrage and popular legislation. Later Marxists agreed that the latter was only an instrument, the best available. But the Social Democrats have lived for sixty years on the illusion that the working classes, armed with that suffrage and at last convinced, will conquer power and, from those exalted heights, will dictate the laws of the Workers' Socialist Republic. The Bolsheviks, as romantic Marxists, simply shared in this socialist error; they were too enslaved by the old doctrine; they thought that political power, the law, the decree, so long as it was they who promulgated them, could forge the new society. Profound mistake! Political power is and will remain necessary to the workers who as a body wish to form the nation; but it is not sufficient: the workers themselves must be ready and they must have at least some idea of their institutions, above all they must have an adequate mentality. For, as we can see . . ., even a state as strong as the Bolshevik state has not been able to force a society as morally and mentally weak as Russia to obey its laws.

Philosophers, moralists and politicians should examine this fact for itself, as well as sociologists. Powerful in its own domains of legislation, pure administration, politics; able to create a state and even to define certain rights; having managed to abolish inheritance and to proclaim that land can only be held in tenure — the law of the Soviets revealed itself to be powerless: to suppress gold-based currency or to establish some other kind; to organise a collective system of production where only an individual one had hitherto been achieved; to replace institutions of free association like co-operatives with obligatory organisations; to close down the market. Either too firmly ingrained habits had prevailed, or material, technical impossibilities had revealed themselves. There is no point in giving a village a motor if it is not also given petrol and a mechanic. What does this mean if not that the domain of the economy and of technique is, of all social domains, precisely the one that most easily, most completely and even most violently, escapes the grip of Politics, and even that of Morality? Not that the economic is dominant,

confused in this jargon with technique; I have already denounced this error. But they are different domains, independent of the domain of the law. In those domains, it can only sanction states of fact and regulate rights; it cannot force anything: neither money, nor credit, nor savings can be imposed; nor can the collective association of individual effort; a *corvée* is the opposite of enthusiastically, or even economically accepted work. In the Economic as in the Technical, the law can destroy only for a time, and not even a very long time: and it cannot invent. It can prohibit the use of a currency, it cannot provide one that will be acceptable; it can proscribe the use of an instrument; it cannot manufacture one in advance, or even often procure one. That is why the law must not precede but only follow customs, and even more so economy and technique.

III Conclusions as to political method

The student of Politics should thus foster a certain scepticism *vis-à-vis* the art for which he is attempting to construct a theory. More even than medicine, it is confined within very close limits. In thousands of cases, the statesman is powerless because he is ignorant; he may even on occasion, when he is clearly aware of the causes or when his grasp of the facts is accurate, know and feel his powerlessness. In every case, it is essential that the politician and the theoretician resign themselves, even at the price of unpopularity, to the frequent proclamation of their weakness and their physical, intellectual or moral incompetence. There is nothing more dishonest than the advertisements in which all parties proclaim their ability to bestow happiness upon the nation. For example, as we can now see by hindsight, too late, nothing could have prevented the bankruptcy of Russia. It is not the least of the errors of the Bolsheviks, the liquidators of the Russian crash, that they believed, or claimed and fostered the belief that, in that infinity of wretchedness and by means of their civil war, they would create wealth, when the latter can only be born of years, labour and peace. . . .

Another lesson. Few doctrines have emerged from the terrible events of the last decade more tattered than that of 'historical materialism'. But this was because it had an initial failing, one that it shared, moreover, with other political doctrines. One should always be on one's guard against the sophistry of according primacy to one or other series of social phenomena. Neither political matters nor moral matters nor economic matters are in any sense dominant in any society, still less the arts applied to them. In the end all these things

are no more than the concepts and categories of our social sciences, which are still in their infancy, and only logomachies distinguish between them. A currency, something economic, is issued by a nation, something political, and it is trusted, it inspires faith and credit, a phenomenon that is both economic and moral, or rather a mental, habitual and traditional phenomenon. Each society is one, with its morals, its technique, its economy, etc. Politics, Morals, Economics are simply elements of the social art, the art of living together. Once you see this, all those contradictions between ideas and dissertations about words become pointless. Social practice, that is the only material provided for the convergent action of the moralist, the economist and the legislator. Or rather, there is no room for three kinds of technician in this art. Those who wish to be expert in it must not allow customs to be outstripped by laws, or the technical, economic and mental habits of a people to be criticised in the name of a universal morals or a pure practical reason. Those habits can only be rectified by replacing them with other habits inspired by other ideas and sentiments, especially by other actions whose success allows them to function as precedents. An art of arts: *τεχνή τεχνῆς ὑπερφεροῦσα*, said Sophocles of tyranny; ['skill surpassing skill', *Oedipus Rex*, 380–81]; Politics in the highest sense of the word should thus not just remain very modest, it must never cut itself off from its sisters, Morals and Economics, for in the end it is identical with them.

The old dream of Socrates, of the citizen, wise, thrifty, virtuous and guardian of the law, above all prudent and just, thus still provides the model for the man of action. If he conforms to it, the responsible politician will be far closer to practical truth than if he abandons himself to the fits of cynicism and materialism, the abuses of lies and violence that are applauded by too many empty people, reactionaries or revolutionaries according to the time and place. For the moment, in Russia, in Italy, in Spain, perhaps tomorrow in Germany, coups d'état, acts of force and authority, of political violence, are apparently successful, but they are no more than shocks, tremors, fevers and symptoms of serious diseases of the body social. The future is not with these unhappy peoples; it is with nations whose enlightened citizens manage to make an effective choice of able, honest and strong delegates, and then nevertheless to keep them in check all the time. For no one knows better than the people, if it is wise, what its interests and its ideas are.

All these political moralisings of a sociologist will perhaps seem either too particular or too remote; some of them will seem, on the one hand, to say too precisely what it is possible

and impossible to do in our modern nations; the rest will seem too broadly and too generously to preach mildness, peace and foresight to socialists and the various progressive parties.

Let there be no mistake, however. Precisely such considerations are appropriate here: the Russian Communist experiment will have served at least one purpose – to teach nations who want to reform how they should go about it and how they should not go about it. They must retain the market and money; they must develop all possible collective institutions; they must avoid incompatibilities between free associations and collectivism, and between the right of association, including the right of the majority, and individualism. Hence this ‘sociological assessment’ has the dual value I wish to attribute to it: a scientific value, because it is a description of our modern societies and in one of them it reveals the essential components that none today can do without; a practical value, because it helps to purge socialist doctrines of a certain number of peremptory aphoristic formulae, a certain number of utopian views and illusions as to the omnipotence of parties and classes.

In addition, these appeals to prudence are by no means intended to edulcorate or slow down action. There must be a force put to work in the service of the law; perhaps it should, certainly it should be used; for, no more than religious laws are civil laws felt by all to the same extent. Social democracies, i.e., those that wish to control their economies in the name of their law and their interests, will not be flocks of sheep whose shepherds know how to shear them and choose which of them will be eaten. Moreover, their action will neither be necessarily slow nor free of violence. I shall not attempt to prophesy. Prudence also often counsels speed, leaping over obstacles, breaking resistance while there is still time, just as often as it may counsel temporisation, waiting until the forms of social life that the law must sanction have grown to maturity. What I mean is that, if necessary, political power is not of itself sufficient, violence can only be the ‘last reason of the laws’.

IV Conclusions as to political logic

But, I shall be told, these conclusions as to social policies and other kinds of policies are just what we would expect from a sociologist. They do not prejudge the question everyone is asking: ‘Does socialism emerge from the Bolshevik experiment proved or disproved?’ I shall be told: ‘Here is an important doctrine, socialism, communism if you like, tested against the facts; you tell us how it can be purified, you do not tell us

whether it is true or false. Do you, like the Communists, see it as having triumphed, or as defeated, like liberal or reactionary doctrinaires?’

My answer, notwithstanding that my candour may seem naive, empty or too detached from the factional struggle, is as follows: ‘The Russian events neither confirm nor contradict socialism.’

Suppose that the Communists had managed to impose the Social Republic of their dreams – which they failed to do – what would it prove? That, in a nation hardly awakened to public life and industrial life, it is possible to establish a socialist regime, or rather, take such precautions against a capitalist regime as to make the latter impossible. Or else that success would show that, after a national social revolution – and a certain dose of capitalism coming from abroad, the latter necessary until the time of the universal revolution – a strong Socialist Government can reduce the dangers of it to a minimal level. This is more or less what the NEP (New Economic Policy) is attempting at present. Or else, again: observing that foreign intervention and civil war, followed by blockade and communism, had, by December 1921, reduced Russia economically to what can be called a zero point, if one drew a graph of its national wealth; secondly, granting rather generously that this Russia will be reborn to a full life and full strength; imagining also that this resurrection will take place entirely under the aegis of Communism, I could conclude that, strictly speaking, in making a *tabula rasa* of everything: the economy, law, political conditions; after ruining everything, and starting again from the zero point – this in a country extending across an entire continent, endowed by nature with limitless and complete resources, and populated by a myriad people, though sparsely – in these extraordinary conditions, in other words, it might be concluded that a young and potentially fabulously wealthy society can indulge itself in ruin followed by a Communist regime.

The success of socialism, or rather of Communism, in Moscow would prove nothing in favour of socialism here. Old industrial democracies with powerful capitalisms, big bourgeoisies in control of public opinion and making the necessary concessions from time to time; with a numerous petty bourgeoisie; with a peasantry which is often rich and mostly property-owning; with a respectable working class inspired by thoroughly bourgeois notions of respectability – such democracies are disposed neither to a dictatorship nor to a communism. Above all they are not disposed to return to an elementary and simple life as, in a variety of guises, the Russian Revolution more or less did, with the peasantry triumphant and a collapse of the refined and decadent edifice of

the rich aristocracy and the feeble capitalism of the old regime.

Nor are our great nations of Europe and America disposed to engage in such risky adventures as these: to ruin the City so as to be able to build it anew. This was only possible in Russia. None would gaily confront, as Russia did courageously, the horrors of blockade and famine in order to resist foreign invasion and reactionary insurgents. They regard socialism as conserving the national wealth, as a better administrator of goods to be preserved, not as an architect of the land of Cockaigne.

And vice versa, the relative failure of Communism in Russia proves nothing either for or against socialism in our Western societies. First of all, if socialism one day adds its superstructures or modifies simply by its presence the arrangement of our societies, it will not do so either by violence or in the course of a catastrophe, either of which would simply be accidents. What it will construct will be built by the clear, conscious action of the citizens. Second, these citizens will belong not only to the class of industrial workers, even when that class is in the majority, although still partly unconscious; they will belong to all the other non-parasitic classes who will bring their concerted assistance to the workers. Thus, what was impossible for the unfortunate muzhiks and the Russian 'comrades' will perhaps be manageable for the educated and wise members of our unions, our co-operatives, even our quite modest local government councils. This argument is often used by our Western Communists, who promise the 'masses' supposedly following them a better and easier revolution than the Russian one. It is no less accurate for serving as cover for a failing and as an admission that the whole Russian action was premature. It remains true: nothing in the Russian experiment allows it to prove that tomorrow the British Labour Party, a legal political party emanating from a numerous, organised and educated democracy, will not be able to put its programme into practice, in part, perhaps victoriously. When it takes place, this example will doubtless be more contagious and more useful than the adventure into which the Russian Communists for a time led the whole nation that they govern.

Not only are the personnel of our nations different from those of the Russian, but those personnel are becoming day by day more capable of organising social and industrial democracy as well as political democracy. Not only do they have an indisputable juridical maturity, they have already reached a quite different stage of economic and mental evolution, and they will be able to start from this stage to achieve things impossible for the Russians. It may even be that they are closer to the goal

than the Russians yet are, despite the latter having taken the supposedly short, straight, direct and easy path of Revolution, which is really a dangerous, vertiginous road, ending perhaps in the abyss. Socialism, if I have correctly conceived it, will consist in the organisation of the market, of credit, of circulation and later, not in principle, not straight away, of production. One proof of this thesis is provided by the Russian experiment itself. The Communists of the New Economy are themselves coming round to it with their *org* (organisations),⁸ organisations at every level and of all kinds of national trusts, with their state banks, their people's banks, etc., etc. Hence I shall say: 'A society like Great Britain, with the gigantic wealth of its state and public corporations, where municipal and administrative socialism have been in vogue for a long time, where the movements of funds in the various forms of social and private insurance exceed those of the whole economy of the Republic of Soviets, where trusts are organised and organise industry, where the working class and the public are already so prepared for the industrialised nationalisation of the mines that the latter has been proposed in a national arbitration,⁹ such a nation has far more possibilities of socialism than poor, agricultural Russia.' Even in England it will easily be possible to nationalise a large part of the land because in many cases it will only involve the suppression of the tenure of the nobility, the churches and the corporations, clearly precarious from a moral standpoint, so as to realise fully the pre-eminent but entirely legal ownership of the King. In a country such as this it will easily be possible to nationalise the mines as well as the land, to which they are attached in the island's law; it will easily be possible to nationalise the railways, which the state already controls, while keeping them industrialised. It will perhaps be possible to group other industries conveniently together, to organise them nationally as enlightened industrialists and civil servants are already suggesting, against unemployment, crises, etc.¹⁰ And the difference between this organisation and a socialist organisation will become very slight.

Let me dream for a moment. If Germany . . . where would it not be? Its state socialism, its municipal, provincial and state corporations, its insurance systems, its vertical and horizontal capitalist organisations, 'cartels', 'trusts' and 'Konzernen', its trade unions, its co-operatives, which are still afloat in the midst of unspeakable chaos, everything in Germany tended towards organisation.

Who can yet say what effect on a society the suppression or restriction in time and degree of kinship of the right of inheritance will have? Who can say what results might not be achieved by

other reforms, so-called, although they will be the Revolution itself, i.e., the ruthless correction of unjustly established rights?

Thus, the Russian Revolution should neither be proposed as an example to be followed nor set up as a bugaboo. Everything that happens over there does so on quite other planes than the ones we occupy here, in the West. Very few events that take place over there disconfirm or confirm anything about the doctrines that among us group the various interests and various and changing opinions of our citizens.

Finally, this assessment of Bolshevism must close with a warning from the sociologist to the public. This time it is a mere lesson in logic and common sense that I want to draw.

Of all arguments, those of politics are the most populated by the idols of the tribe, the market-place, the most impregnated with 'ethos and pathos', with prejudices and passions that vitiate them entirely. Moreover, they are usually, like lawyers' pleas, constructed on the basis of a 'brief', not from facts or reasons. Thus, in politics debates consist of a constant sophistry, mingling right and fact, as if in a courtroom.

But among the arguments constantly used both in the Soviets and in Parliaments and Congresses, there is one which should most especially be proscribed, and that is the argument from historical or political analogy. Generally, the argument moves from one precedent to the other. Doctors do the same, and thus they often make mistakes, but they have no other way to calculate until the biological and pathological sciences have finally given them the light. But in politics there are few excuses for the error. In it one is not allowed to argue only *de homine ad hominem*. But a question of the sort I have been asked postulates the possibility of concluding from one collective individual to another collective individual, from Russia to France, for example, and vice versa. There is a vague notion that societies are not individuals and that generally applicable precepts can be laid down on the basis of one precedent that will serve for the members of another society. To do so is to deceive oneself. Societies are individuals, often by no means amorphous ones, with great resistance. Thus those formed by the Jews around the Temple, or those unfortunate Polynesian natives of the Chatham Islands who allowed themselves to perish rather than renounce their taboos. Few collectivities, few civilisations are even more strangely individualised, have a character more heterogeneous to that of other peoples than the immense, homogeneous, very old yet still very youthful mass of the Great Russians. What is possible and what impossible are different for them from what they are for us. Only when there is a

certain uniformity of material progress, a certain unity of mentality and thought, and above all a certain equality of age, amongst a number of different nations can one attempt to transport, as the Romans and Napoleon did, institutions from one country to another. Let us therefore avoid abusing historical and political argument. The very prevalent and highly inaccurate erudition of journalists is illusory; that of diplomats, politicians and jurists is just as dangerous; it is rotten with history and stuffed with too many precedents.

What is needed, however, is to habituate ourselves to no longer reasoning in the past and missing the present, to attempt to reason about each question as if it were posed alone, and to try to find its practical solution directly, by a sense of the social.

In another respect, vulgar political reasoning is no less at fault. Most often it is still inspired by the intemperate rationalism of the last few centuries, uncorrected in this domain by an appropriate experimental method. Scholasticism, still finding refuge today in the Law Faculties and in party-political argument, claims to derive everything in social and political matters by deduction. For it, as societies are only ideal objects, the ideas of individuals, they must themselves be based on Ideas and Principles. These principles are known and translated metaphysically into words ending in 'ism': capitalism, socialism, individualism, egalitarianism, nationalism, and so on: as many can be constructed as are desired. Societies' only occupation is to apply these principles, and their laws' only *raison d'être* is to realise those ideas and systems. Even more remarkably, they are supposed to be able to change their principles. So we are taught in universities and so are matters discussed in parliaments, the learned journals and popular meetings. Sophists of every party indulge themselves to their hearts' content contrasting principle with principle, 'ism' word with 'ism' word, and this serves as a cover for the interests at stake. Few errors have wreaked such damage, and if this little book was so useful as to warn honest people once again against these forms of argument, it would have achieved its aim. No, there are no exclusively capitalist societies and there will no doubt be no exclusively socialist ones. There have been no societies that were only feudal, or only monarchic, or only republican. There are only societies which have a regime, or rather — what is even more complicated — systems of regimes, which are more or less characterised, regimes and systems of regimes of their economies, of their political organisations; they have customs and mentalities that can be more or less arbitrarily defined by the predominance of one or other of these systems or institutions. That is all. Just as one can, for example, define

someone's character by saying he is bilious; but this does not mean his heart does not work like everyone else's. Even in normal circumstances; a society, an entity with a thousand dimensions, an environment of living and thinking environments, is agitated by all sorts of currents, often contradictory ones, and in all directions: some still well up from the depths of the past, even the prehistoric past; others correspond to events slowly working themselves out, unbeknownst even to those who will tomorrow be their agents or patients, beneficiaries or victims. Nothing happens in societies as it does in a jurist's sorites or in a forum sophism. That is enough: these disputes about '-ism' terms are only plays on words and between parties. Once there were wars between Empires and Churches for a *que* to add to a *filio*. The struggle between the dogmas was only the appearance, the accident: the essential, the fact, the aim was the battle. Now these social dogmas constitute the site of struggles between dethroned regimes, parasitic classes reliant on heredity, money interests and the routinised mass on the one hand, on the other wretched proletariats or those which, already better endowed, wish to rise to better things yet, democratic and independent peoples or peoples still subjugated and tyrannised. It is already an advance that public affairs are no longer discussed in other terms than those of public affairs, and metaphysics and religion are not involved, as they still were not so very long ago. But this advance is not enough; another one must be made. Politics will not become a rational art until the day it detaches itself from this metaphysics, until it abandons as far as is necessary these '-ism' words: capitalism, liberalism and so on, and the whole attendant hair-splitting substantialism. It will then in its turn escape all systems. Then once again, no doubt, it will be able to apply or attempt to apply to each problem — as the engineer (the ingenious one) does — the solution inspired by a precise awareness of the facts and an inkling, if not the certainty, of the laws governing them.

Besides, this childish and dangerous dogmatism will perhaps be obliterated earlier than one might think. Almost all the current political schools are excessively boastful of their realism. The school of the Russian New Economics is not so very far from the 'socialism without doctrines' that is perhaps the best socialism of all.

At any rate, the philosopher, the sociologist, the moralist must abandon to others responsibility for those peremptory and categorical formulae and those ill-made concepts overloaded with passion which so often lead societies astray. Their role is to accustom others to think, modestly and practically, without

system, without prejudice, without sentiment. The thinkers must educate the people to make use of their ordinary common sense which, in particular where politics is concerned, is also their sense of the social, in other words, of the just.

A modest conclusion, it will be said, too logical and academic. Politicians will scent ideology in that word justice. But it is they who make use of big words; they who construct hasty generalisations into systems. They are bad ideologists. Let them therefore learn to 'think properly'. The example of Russia frightens them! Let us hope it will encourage them to make an effort at logic and sound social practice.

Notes

* Originally published as 'Appréciation sociologique du bolchévisme in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, Vol. 31 No. 1, 1924, pp. 103–132.

1. Examples of organisations of this kind: the pre-war German laws regulating the production and the prices of potash, to the mutual advantage of the state and the potash trust; similarly the Chilean laws and the Chilean companies in the exploitation of the nitrate deposits; lastly those mixed companies of states and capitalists which ensured the production and fixing of the prices of petrol in England (the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which is in the process of dissolution, it is true). In France the recent unworkable and quasi-Bolshevik regulation of the nation's fuel combines the state, the oil industry and the alcohol distillers, fixes the prices and ruthlessly forces technicians and consumers to use a 'national' product!

2. Cf. his letter of March 1923, reproduced in the *Correspondance Internationale*.^v

3. 'Capital et Travail', *Cahiers du Socialiste*.

4. 'Observations sur la Violence', *La Vie Socialiste*, 4^e Année, N.S. 1923.

5. *Reflections on Violence*.

6. *Life of Agricola*, 32, spoken by the British chieftan Calgacus.

7. '... τὸ φίλον ἀπώλεσαν καὶ τὸ κοῖνον ἐν τῇ πόλει' ['the bonds of friendliness and fellowship in the state'] (Plato: *Leges* 697c).

8. They had to resort to a French word to designate this. For example, *vnesbtorg*, organisation for foreign trade, *optorg*, etc.^w

9. Judge Sankey's arbitration, 1920.

10. Sir Lynden Macassey, M. Pybus, among others.